



The Inimitable Birbal

Vol. 580 Rs. 25



Amar Chitra Katha: the Glorious Heritage of India

PANDIT GANGARAM

BIRBAL HAD GAINED THE REPUTATION OF BEING A SKILFUL SOLVER OF PROBLEMS. ONE DAY, A BRAHMIN CALLED GANGARAM CAME TO HIM.

BIRBAL SAHIB, I HAVE A PROBLEM WHICH ONLY YOU CAN SOLVE.

WHAT IS IT?

I AM A BRAHMIN BY BIRTH. MY FOREFATHERS WERE GREAT SANSKRIT SCHOLARS. EVERYONE CALLED THEM PANDITS.

YES, I REMEMBER YOUR FATHER.

I HAVE NEITHER MUCH LEARNING NOR WEALTH.

DO YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU GET WORK?

NO, I AM CONTENTED WITH MY LIFE. BUT I HAVE JUST ONE WISH. I WANT PEOPLE TO ADDRESS ME AS PANDIT.

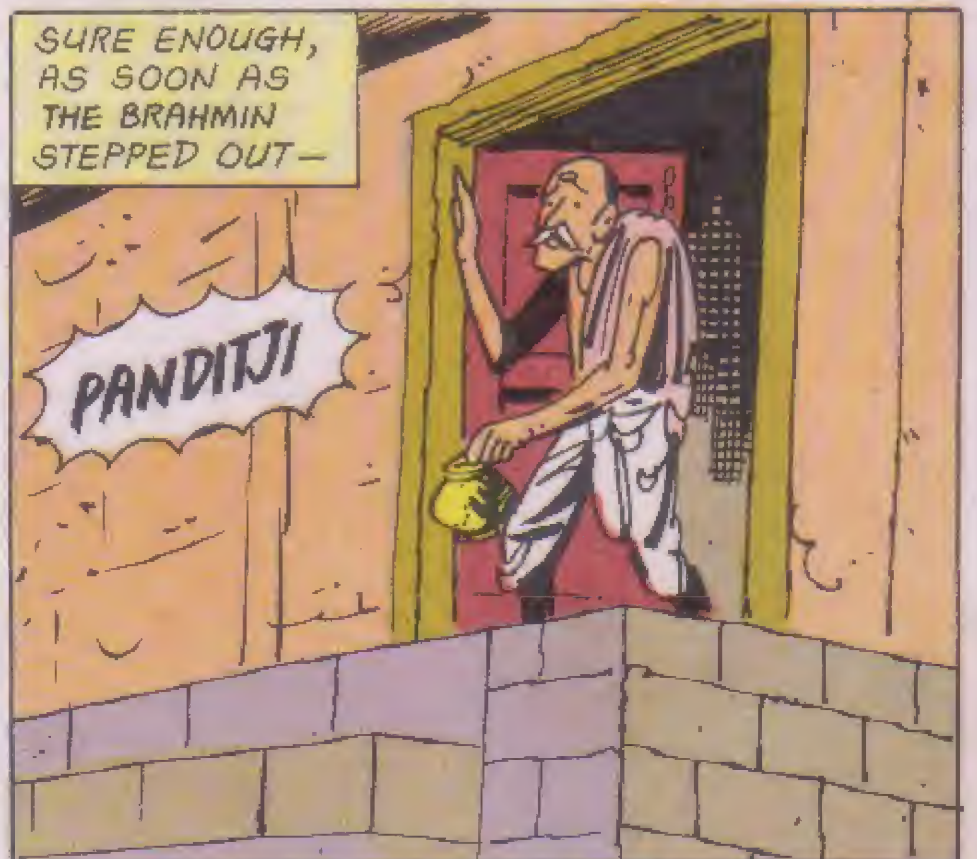
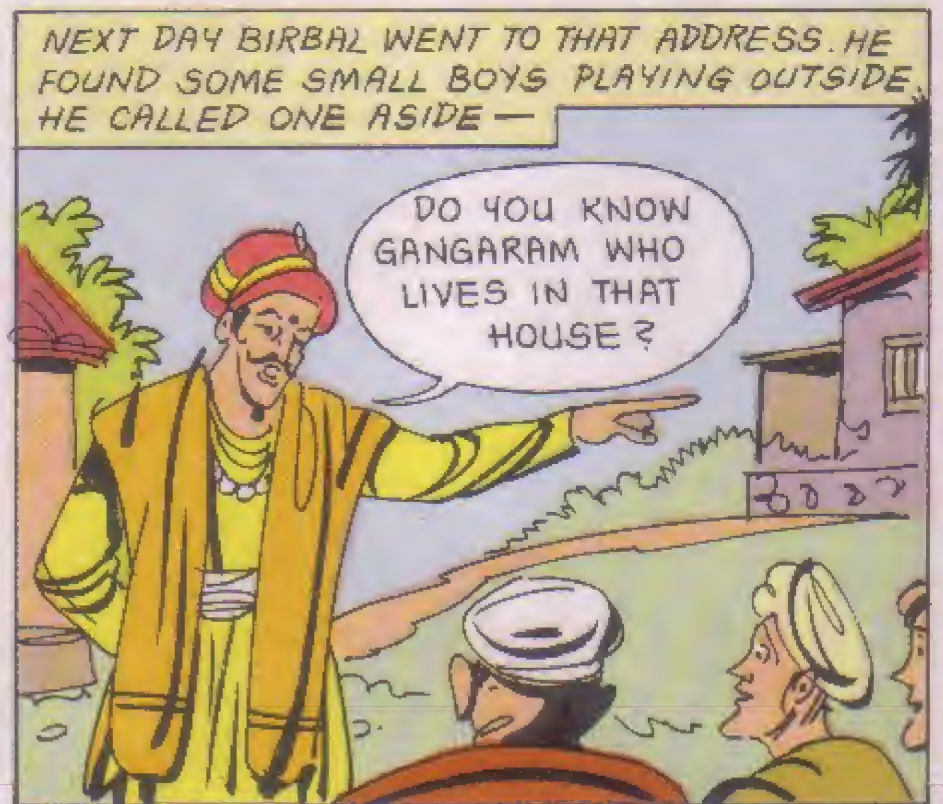
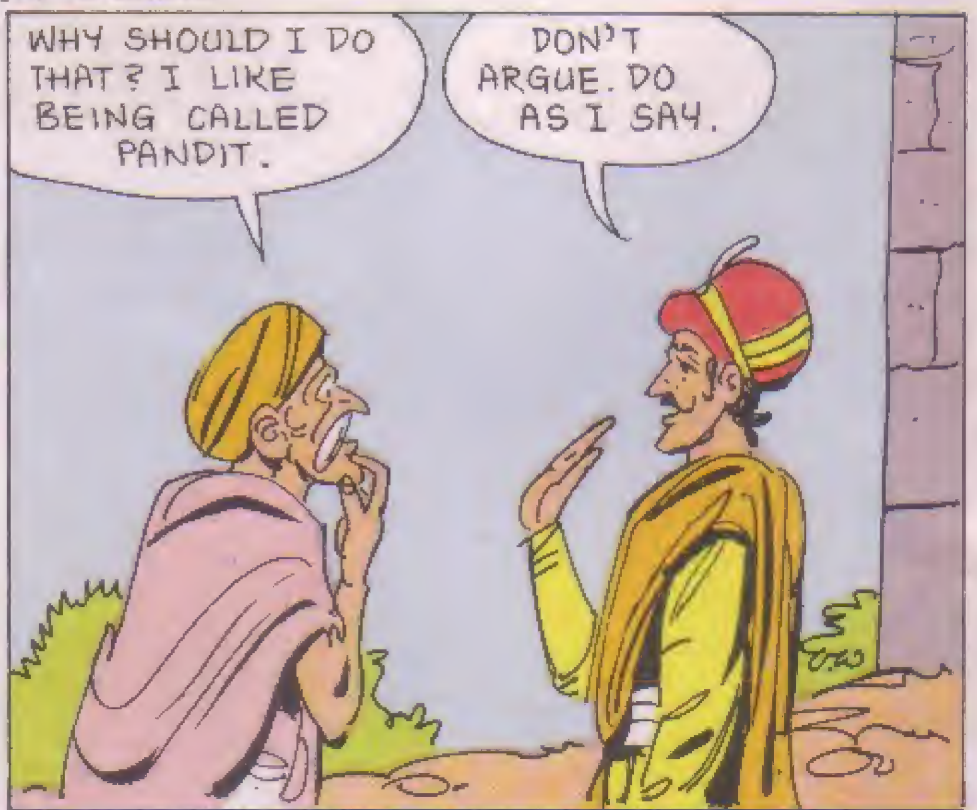
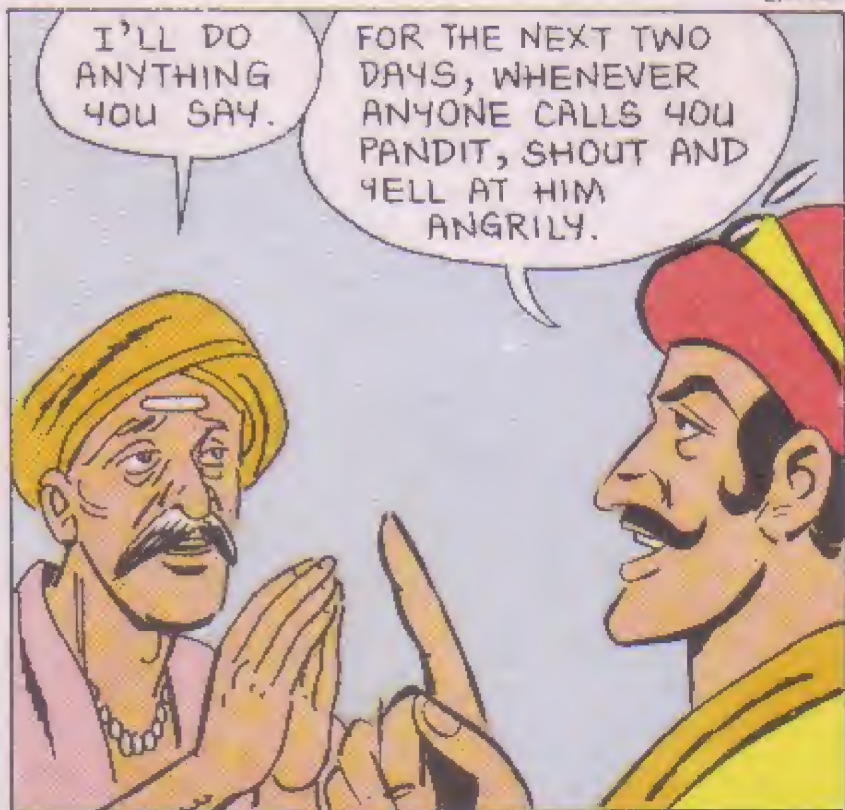
IS THAT ALL? YOU ONLY WANT TO BE CALLED PANDIT?

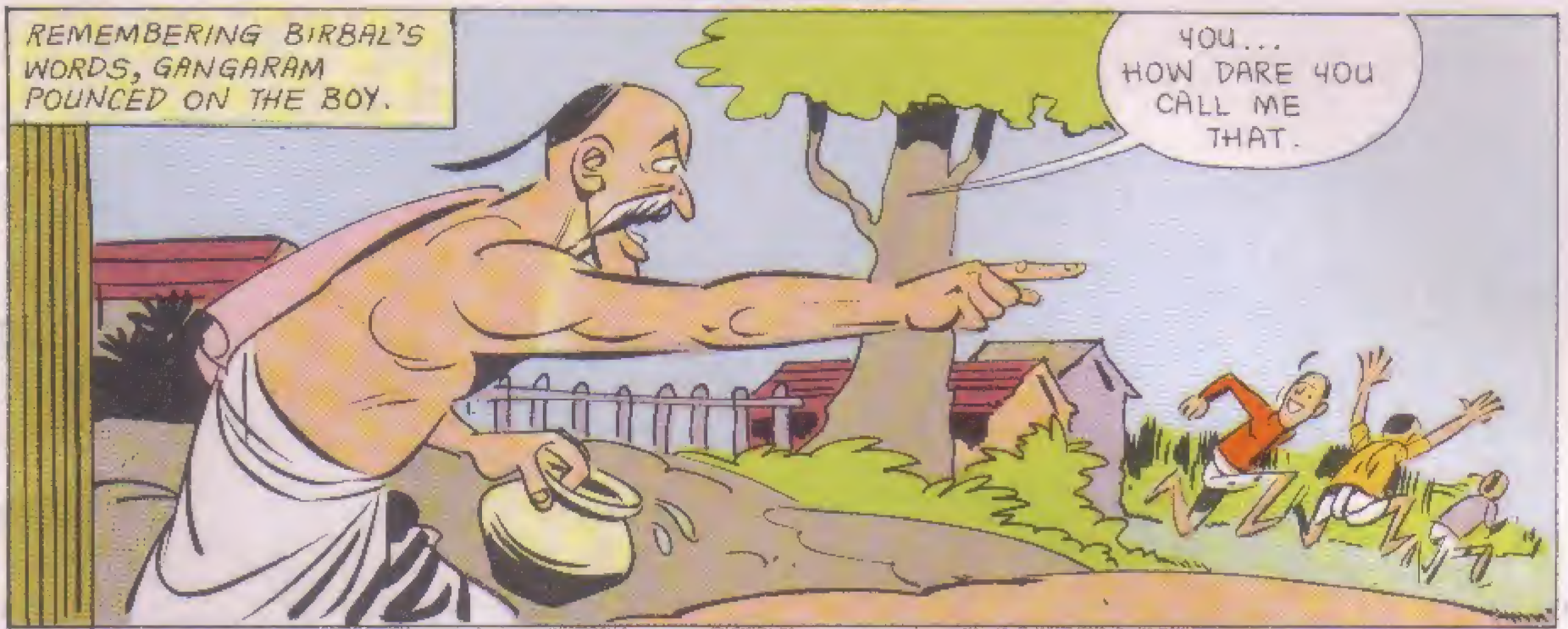
YES. I KNOW IT IS DIFFICULT. BUT NO TASK IS DIFFICULT FOR YOU.

I CAN DO IT IN JUST TWO DAYS.

YOU MEAN EVERYONE WILL BEGIN TO CALL ME PANDIT IN JUST TWO DAYS?

WELL, MAYBE THREE. BUT YOU MUST FOLLOW MY INSTRUCTIONS.





REMEMBERING BIRBAL'S WORDS, GANGARAM POUNCED ON THE BOY.

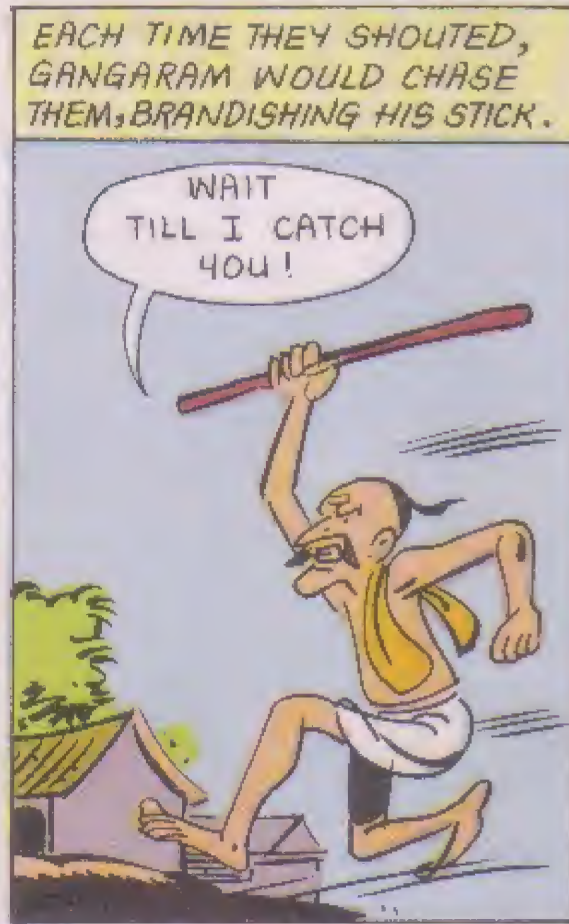
YOU... HOW DARE YOU CALL ME THAT.



NOW THE OTHER BOYS TOOK UP THE CUE.

PANDITJI!

OHH PANDITJI!



EACH TIME THEY SHOUTED, GANGARAM WOULD CHASE THEM, BRANDISHING HIS STICK.

WAIT TILL I CATCH YOU!

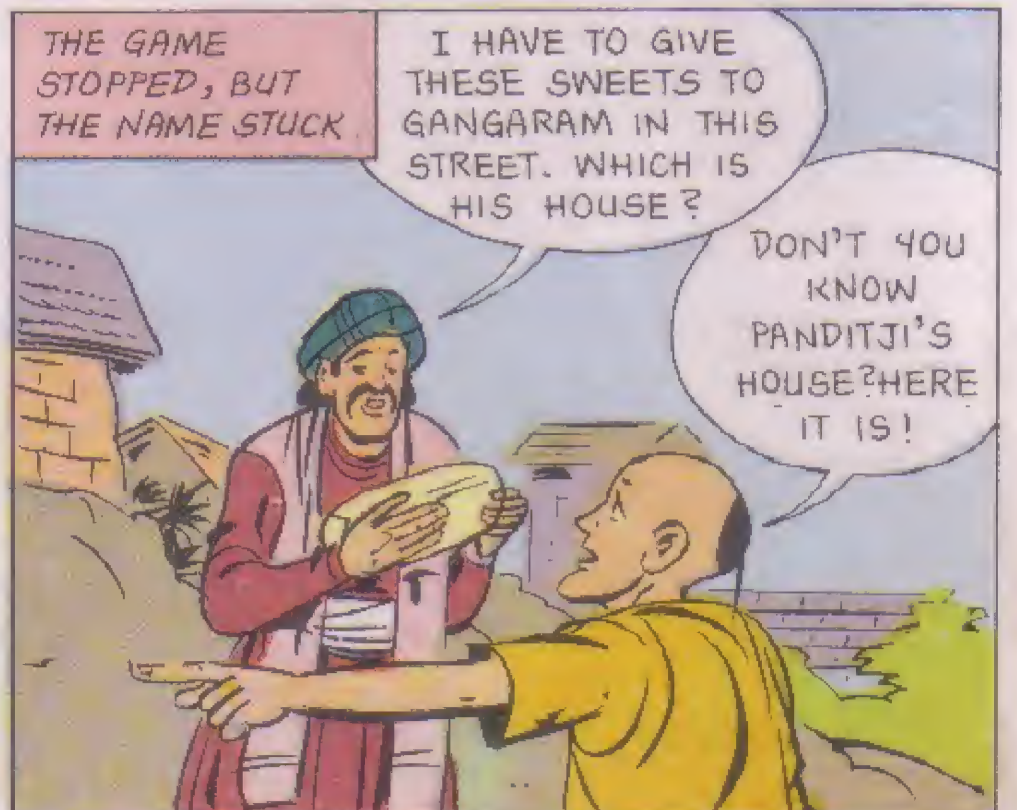


IT BECAME A POPULAR PASTIME IN BARA CHOWK.

YOU WANT TO HAVE SOME FUN? JUST CALL THAT MAN 'PANDITJI'!



SOON, HOWEVER, THEY TIRED OF THE GAME BECAUSE GANGARAM STOPPED ABUSING THEM.



THE GAME STOPPED, BUT THE NAME STUCK.

I HAVE TO GIVE THESE SWEETS TO GANGARAM IN THIS STREET. WHICH IS HIS HOUSE?

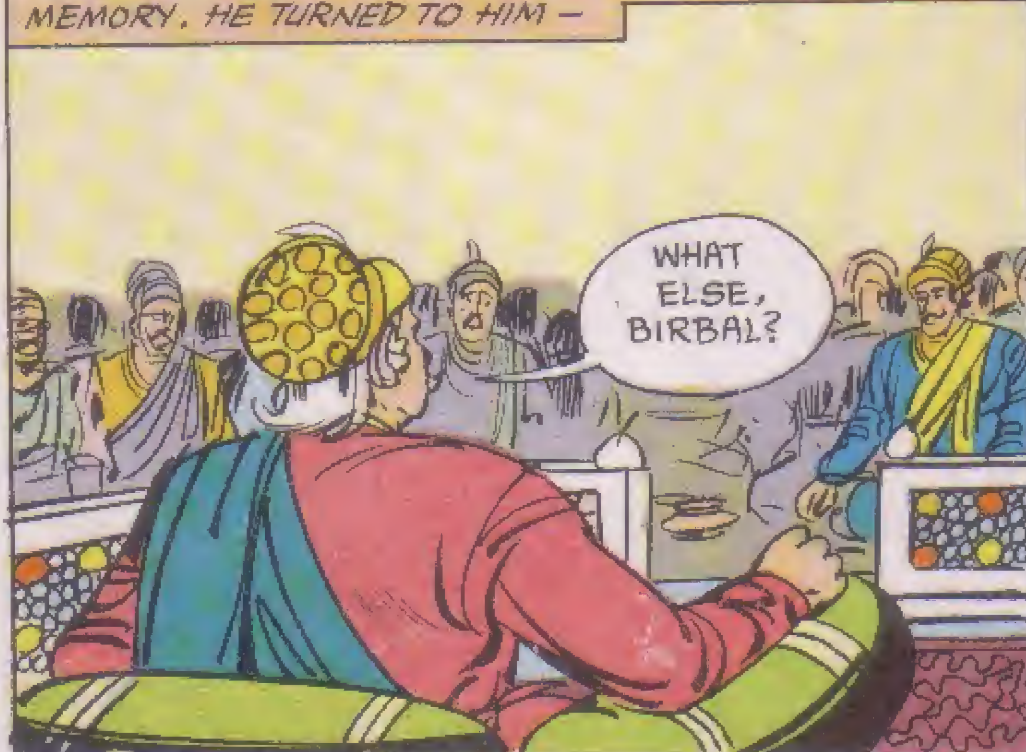
DON'T YOU KNOW PANDITJI'S HOUSE? HERE IT IS!

AND CURRY OF COURSE

ONE DAY AKBAR CALLED FOR BIRBAL.



JUST THEN, A COURTIER INTERRUPTED WITH AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR THE EMPEROR, AND THE CONVERSATION REMAINED UNFINISHED. NEXT DAY IN THE DURBAR, AKBAR WANTED TO TEST BIRBAL'S MEMORY. HE TURNED TO HIM -



BIRBAL REALISED THAT AKBAR WAS REFERRING TO THE CONVERSATION OF THE PREVIOUS DAY. PROMPTLY HE SAID -



AKBAR WAS IMMENSELY PLEASED.

WAH! BIRBAL.
YOU ARE INDEED
GREAT. HERE!
TAKE THIS
PEARL
NECKLACE.

THE COURTIER'S PRESENT WERE
PERPLEXED.

WHY, THE KING MUST REALLY
BE FOND OF CURRY. HE GAVE
BIRBAL A PRESENT JUST FOR
MENTIONING THE WORD
CURRY.

AFTER THE COURT HAD
DISPERSED, THEY GOT
TOGETHER FOR
DISCUSSIONS.

WE MUST BRING
THE BEST CURRY
FOR THE EMPEROR
TOMORROW.

YES, LOTS
OF IT.

SURELY
HE WILL
REWARD US
TOO.

THE NEXT DAY THEY
ARRIVED IN THE DURBAR
WITH THEIR SERVANTS
CARRYING HUGE URNS
OF CURRY ON THEIR
HEADS.

WHAT'S ALL
THIS? WHAT ARE
THESE MEN
CARRYING TO
THE COURT?

WE HAVE
BROUGHT CURRY
FOR YOU,
JAHANPANA. WE
KNOW NOW HOW
MUCH YOU LIKE
IT.

AKBAR UNDERSTOOD
AT ONCE —

YOU FOOLS! WHAT
BIRBAL SAID YESTERDAY
WAS IN ANOTHER CONTEXT. AS
A PUNISHMENT FOR YOUR
STUPIDITY I WILL MAKE YOU EAT
ALL THIS CURRY JUST NOW.

FORGIVE US!
WE WILL NOT ACT
IN HASTE NEXT
TIME.

BIRBAL HAD A GOOD LAUGH.

THE ONLY ROOSTER

AKBAR LOVED TO PLAY HARMLESS TRICKS ON BIRBAL.

SO MANY TIMES HAVE I TRIED TO TRAP HIM, BUT HE ALWAYS GETS THE BETTER OF ME.

THIS TIME I WILL GET EVEN WITH HIM.

THE NEXT DAY AT THE COURT, HE SENT BIRBAL ON AN ERRAND. ADDRESSING THE REST OF THE COURTIER, AKBAR SAID —

HERE IS A BASKET OF EGGS. I WANT EACH ONE OF YOU TO TAKE AN EGG AND KEEP IT HIDDEN.

LATER, WHEN I ASK YOU TO DIVE INTO THE POOL, YOU MUST PRETEND YOU FOUND IT THERE. UNDERSTOOD?

YES, JAHANPANAH

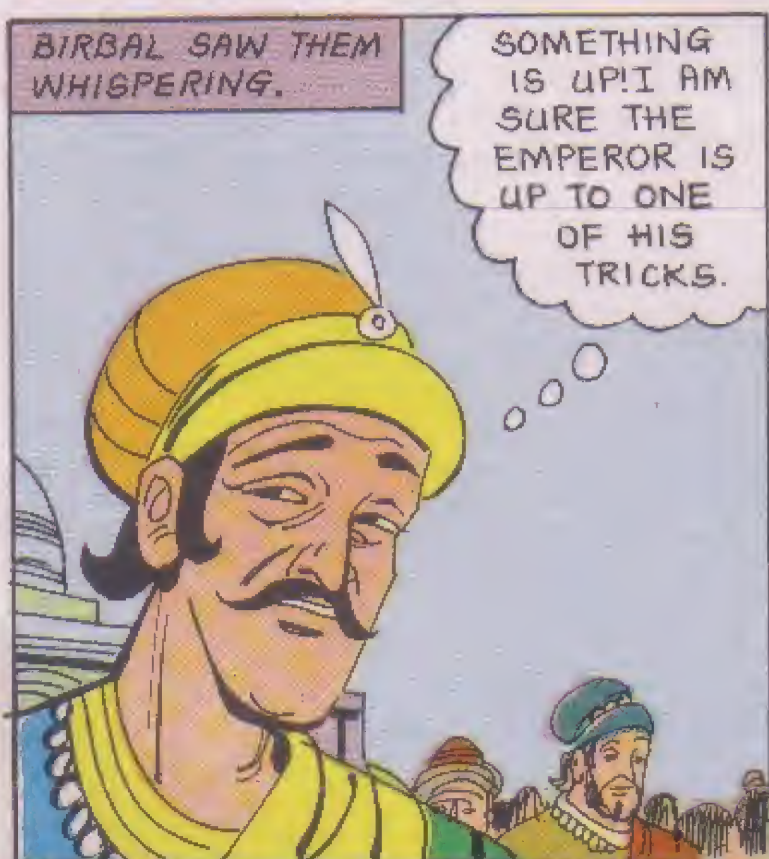
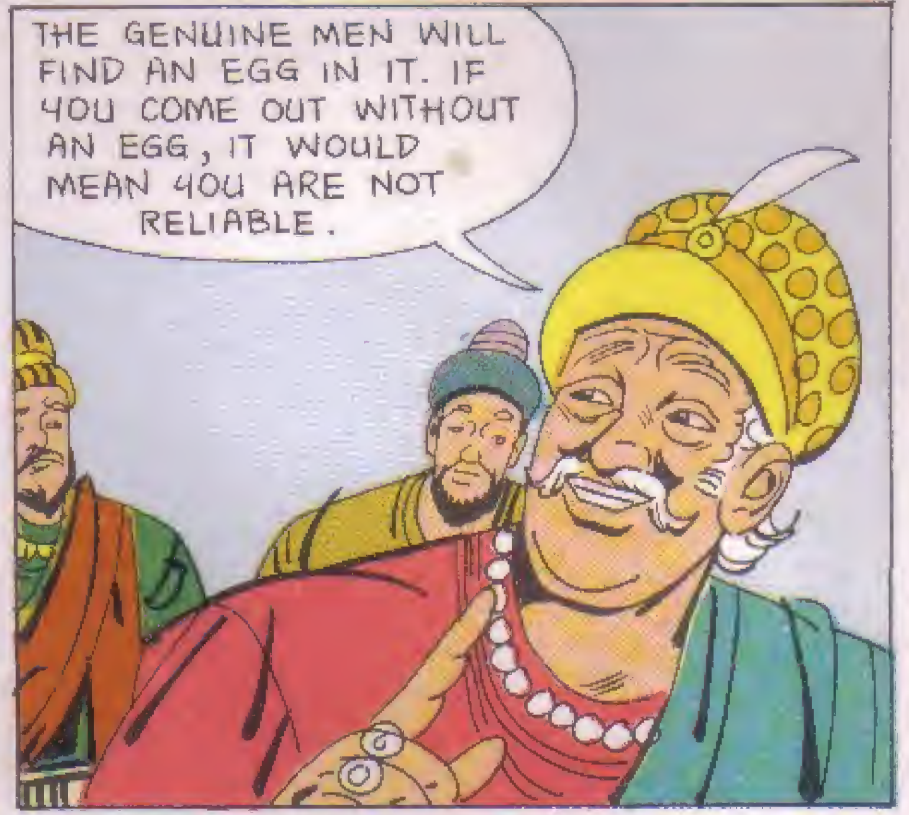
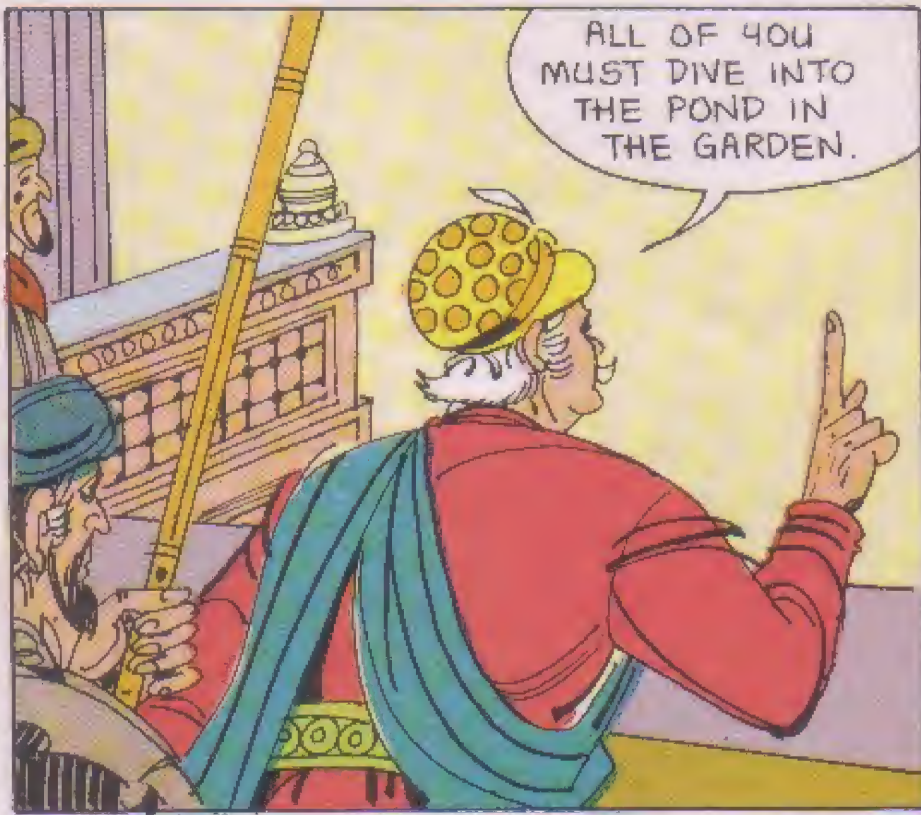
QUEER IDEAS HIS MAJESTY HAS.

BETTER HUMOUR HIM AND DO AS HE SAYS.

MUST BE A NEW GAME HE HAS THOUGHT OF.

BUT WHEN BIRBAL RETURNED TO THE COURT, THEY UNDERSTOOD.

BIRBAL, YESTERDAY I HAD A STRANGE DREAM. FROM IT I GOT AN EXCELLENT IDEA FOR TESTING THE ABILITIES OF THE MEN OF MY COURT.



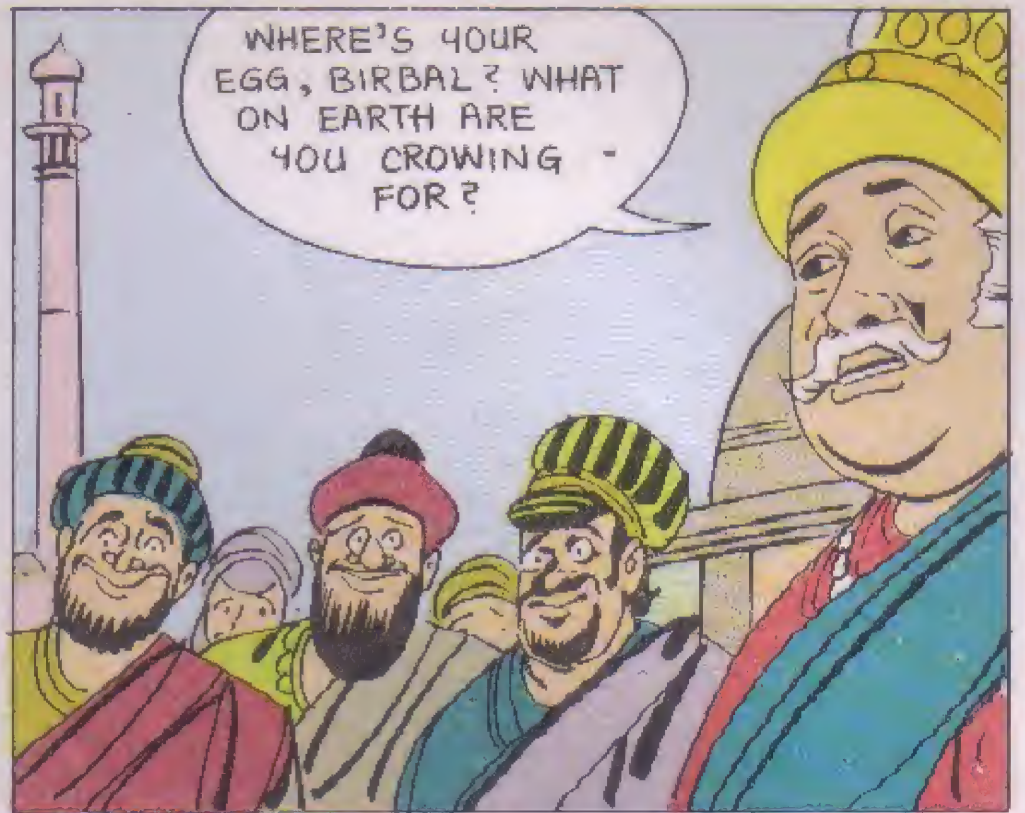


AFTER SHAKING THE WATER OFF HIS BODY, HE STOOD UP.

COCK-A-DOODLE DOO!
COCK-A-DOODLE DOO!



WHERE'S YOUR EGG, BIRBAL? WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU CROWING FOR?

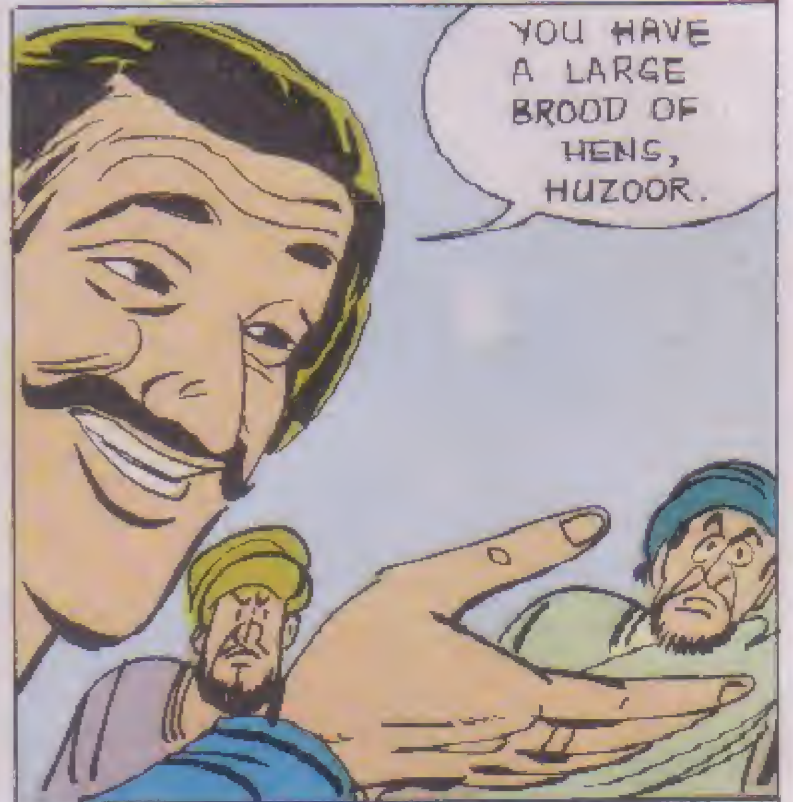


BIRBAL REPLIED —

SURELY YOU KNOW THAT ONLY HENS LAY EGGS, NOT COCKS.



YOU HAVE A LARGE BROOD OF HENS, HUZOOR.



BUT I AM THE ONLY ROOSTER!



THE COURTIERS FELT VERY EMBARRASSED.

HA HA! TRULY BIRBAL, YOU ARE REALLY ONE OF A KIND!



PARTING OF FRIENDS

ONE DAY, WHILE BIRBAL WAS AWAY ON A MISSION, EMPEROR AKBAR CALLED HIS COURTIER'S TOGETHER

I AM A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT PRINCE SALIM.

WHY HUZOOR?

HE'S A FINE BOY.

AND SO HANDSOME TOO.

AKBAR INTERRUPTED —

YES, I KNOW HE IS A GOOD BOY, BUT OF LATE, HE HAS FALLEN INTO BAD COMPANY.

OH, YOU MEAN THAT BOY, YASINE?

YES, THAT FELLOW IS NO GOOD.

SALIM HAD LEARNT THE ROYAL DUTIES SO WELL.

I WAS REALLY PROUD OF HIM. BUT NOW ALL HE DOES IS LAZE ABOUT ALL DAY, PLAY CARDS, AND GO FOR SHIKAR.

YES, THAT'S TRUE. BUT HUZOOR, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE A 16-YEAR-OLD FROM HIS FRIEND.

THAT IS WHY I AM CONSULTING YOU. AFTER ALL, AS THE PRINCE, HIS FUTURE IS YOUR CONCERN TOO.

WE WILL TRY TO FIND A WAY.

BUT A WHOLE MONTH PASSED. NO ONE COULD THINK OF A PLAN TO CORRECT THE PRINCE.

HUZOOR, SEND YASIN AWAY TO ANOTHER PLACE.

NO, THAT WILL ONLY TURN SALIM AGAINST ME.

WHY NOT TELL SALIM WHAT YOU THINK OF YASIN?

NO, MIRZA, THAT MIGHT MAKE SALIM MORE FOND OF HIM.

WHEN BIRBAL RETURNED FROM HIS TRAVELS, AKBAR TURNED TO HIM FOR HELP.

YOU WANT TO SEPARATE THE TWO YOUNG MEN. WHY, GIVE ME JUST TWO DAYS.

NEXT DAY, AT COURT, BIRBAL CALLED YASIN —

BZZZZ!

ALOUD HE SAID —

NOW, DON'T BREATHE A WORD OF THIS TO ANYONE.

BIRBAL MUST BE GOING CRAZY. HE JUST SAID, "JUST ONE SEED IN EVERY MANGO!"

AS SOON AS THE COURT
DISPERSED, SALIM RUSHED
TO MEET YASIN.

WHAT WAS IT?
WHAT SECRET
DID BIRBAL
TELL YOU?

NOTHING. HE
JUST
WHISPERED
SOME NON-
SENSE.



SALIM WAS NOT CONVINCED.

HE COULDN'T HAVE CALLED
YOU IN THE DURBAR JUST
TO WHISPER NONSENSE.

IT'S
TRUE. EVEN
I CANNOT
UNDERSTAND
IT.



BUT SURELY HE MUST
HAVE SAID SOME-
THING.

ALL RIGHT. IF YOU
INSIST. ALL HE
SAID WAS "JUST
ONE SEED IN
EVERY MANGO!"



YOU ARE HIDING SOME-
THING FROM ME, YASIN.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE
MY FRIEND.

OF COURSE I AM
I AM TELLING
YOU THE
TRUTH.



I DON'T
BELIEVE YOU,
YASIN.

BUT IT IS
TRUE. HE SAID
JUST THAT.
MAYBE HE'S
GOING
CRAZY.



BUT BIRBAL, WHO WAS SECRETLY
OVERHEARING THE CONVERSATION,
WAS FAR FROM CRAZY.

YASIN, I DON'T WANT
TO TALK TO YOU EVER
AGAIN IN MY LIFE.

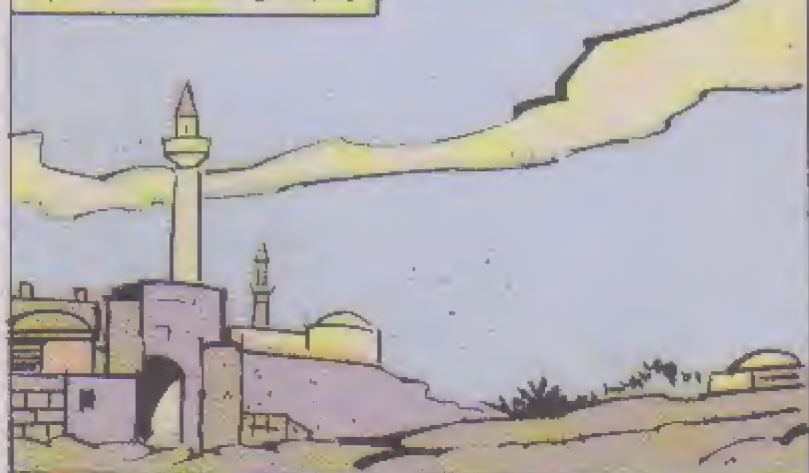
IF YOU DON'T
TRUST ME,
I TOO DON'T
WANT YOU
AS A FRIEND.



AND SOON, SALIM WENT BACK
TO HIS ROYAL DUTIES.

THE PHASES OF THE MOON

ONCE AKBAR SENT BIRBAL TO KABUL ON A SECRET ROYAL MISSION.



BIRBAL TRIED TO MINGLE WITH THE LOCAL CROWD, BUT—

I SUSPECT THAT MAN! HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE AN ORDINARY PERSON.

YES, THOUGH HE POSES TO BE ONE OF US, HE IS OBVIOUSLY AN OUTSIDER.



WHY, HE MUST BE A SPY.

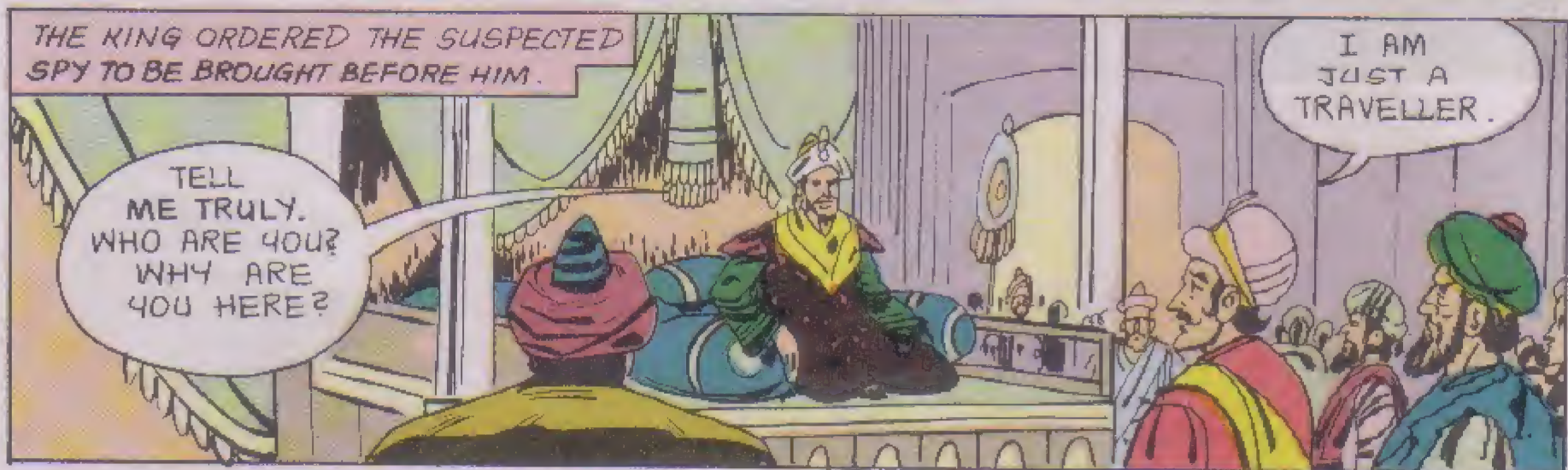


LET'S REPORT HIM TO OUR KING.



THE KING ORDERED THE SUSPECTED SPY TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE HIM.

TELL ME TRULY. WHO ARE YOU? WHY ARE YOU HERE?



I AM JUST A TRAVELLER.

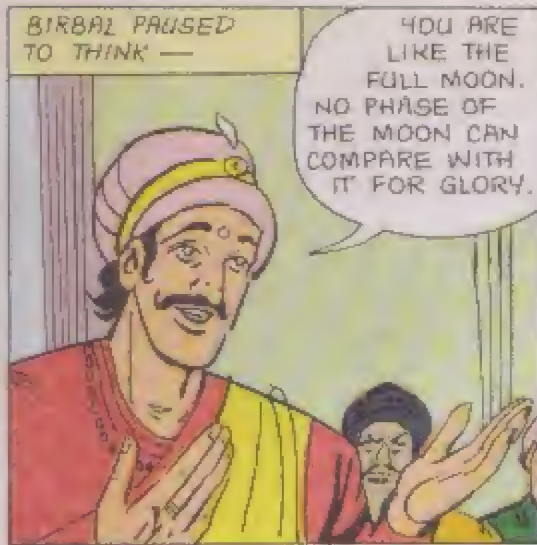
I HAVE TRAVELLED THROUGH MANY KINGDOMS AND ARRIVED HERE.

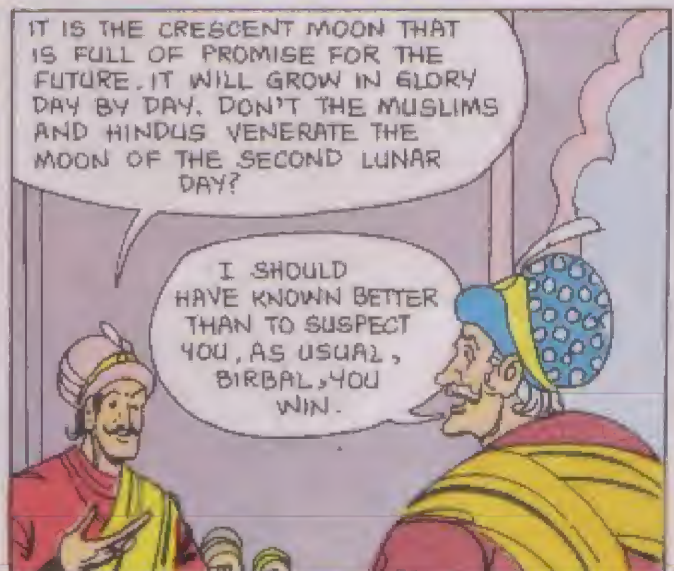
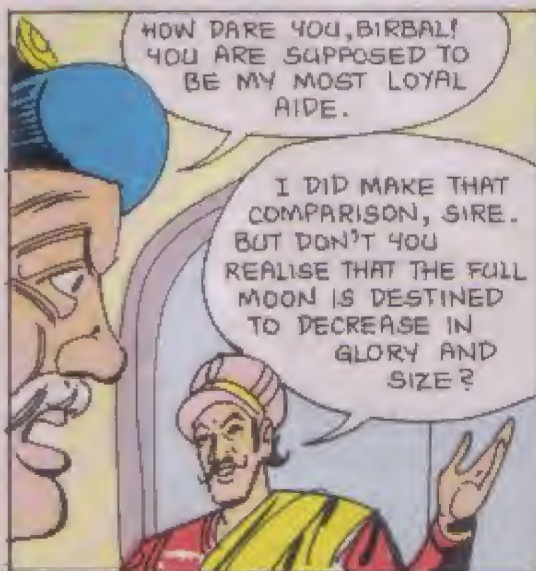
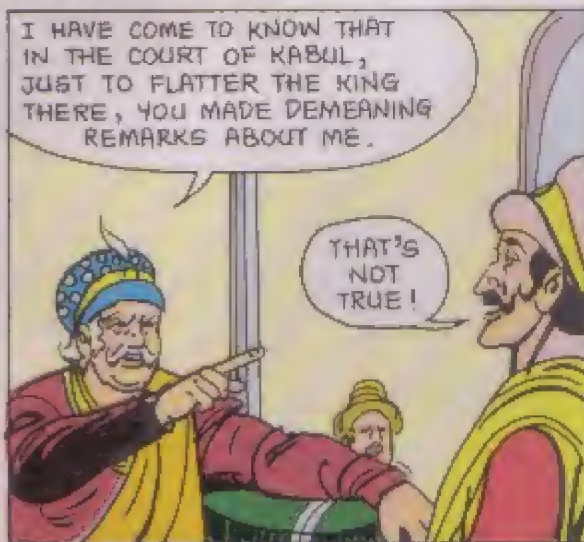
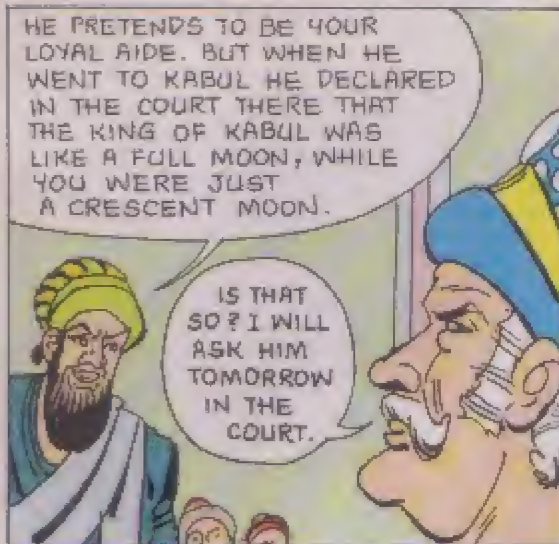
IS THAT SO?



WELL, SINCE YOU HAVE TRAVELLED SO MUCH AND SEEN SO MUCH OF THE WORLD, TELL ME, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY RULE?







VALUE OF WASTE

ONE DAY IN THE COURT—

SEE THIS EXCELLENT VASE!

NO, IT'S A LITTLE CHIPPED. NEVER SHOW ME ANYTHING BROKEN.

BIRBAL INTERVENED—

WHY, HUZOOR?

SURELY, BIRBAL, YOU KNOW THAT ANYTHING THAT IS BROKEN, CRUSHED OR ROTTEN IS OF NO USE TO ANYONE.

SOMETIMES MAYBE, BUT THAT IS NOT ALWAYS TRUE.

PROVE IT TO ME, BIRBAL.

THE JUICE WE GET FROM SUGARCANE BY BREAKING AND CRUSHING GIVES SUGAR, JAGGERY AND DELICIOUS SWEETS, FIT TO BE A DIVINE OFFERING.

THE COTTON POD BURSTS FORTH TO YIELD THE COTTON STRING. CLOTHES MADE FROM ITS SPINNING AND WEAVING ARE FIT FOR EVEN A KING.

THE ROTTEN DECAYING RAGS, OLD JUTE AND OTHER WASTES YIELD PAPER FOR THE SACRED QURAN AS WELL AS OUR PURANAS.

INDEED THAT'S TRUE, BIRBAL. EVERYTHING HAS ITS USE, EVEN THE BROKEN, CRUSHED AND ROTTEN STUFF.

THE TRUE OWNER

ONE DAY AKBAR, BIRBAL AND THE OTHER COURTIER'S WERE IN THE DIWAN-I-AM. SUDDENLY —



BIRBAL PAUSED FOR A WHILE.

WE'LL SETTLE THE MATTER HERE IN THE COURT TOMORROW.



AFTER THE COURT ADJOURNED, BIRBAL CHANGED HIS COURTIER'S CLOTHES TO THAT OF A MUNIM* AND WENT TO THE RIVERBANK WITH A FRIEND.

THERE, THE SECOND BOAT. HE IS THE MAN. LET'S GO.



AS PLANNED EARLIER, HIS FRIEND BEGAN TO NEGOTIATE.

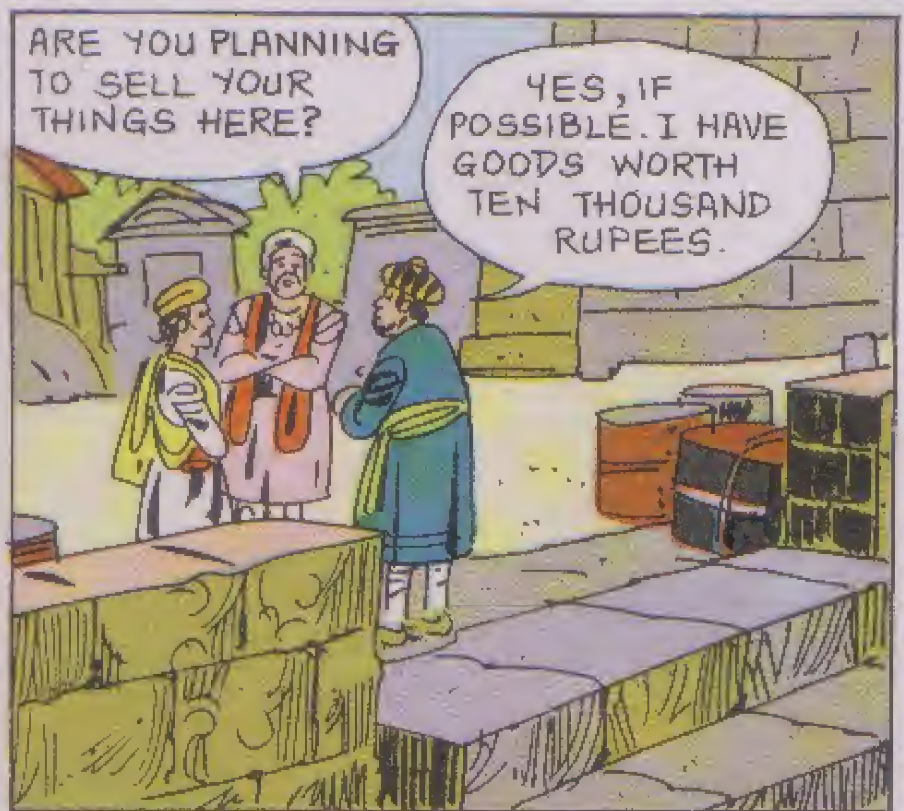
WHAT GOODS HAVE YOU TO SELL?

OH! THE FINEST PERSIAN CARPETS.



ARE YOU PLANNING TO SELL YOUR THINGS HERE?

YES, IF POSSIBLE. I HAVE GOODS WORTH TEN THOUSAND RUPEES.



WELL, THE MARKET FOR CARPETS IS RATHER LOW IN DELHI THESE DAYS. SO, IF YOU WANT TO SELL YOUR STUFF, I'LL TAKE IT FOR FIVE THOUSAND.

FOR HALF THE PRICE?



THINK ABOUT IT AND LET ME KNOW.

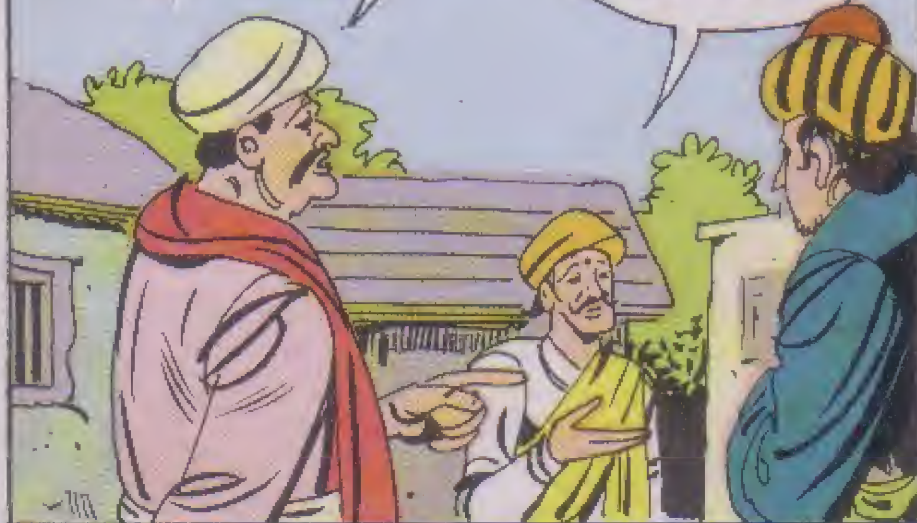
WAIT! WAIT! I'LL SELL IT FOR FIVE THOUSAND.



THE TRADER NOW TURNED TO HIS MUNIM WHO WAS IN REALITY BIRBAL IN DISGUISE.

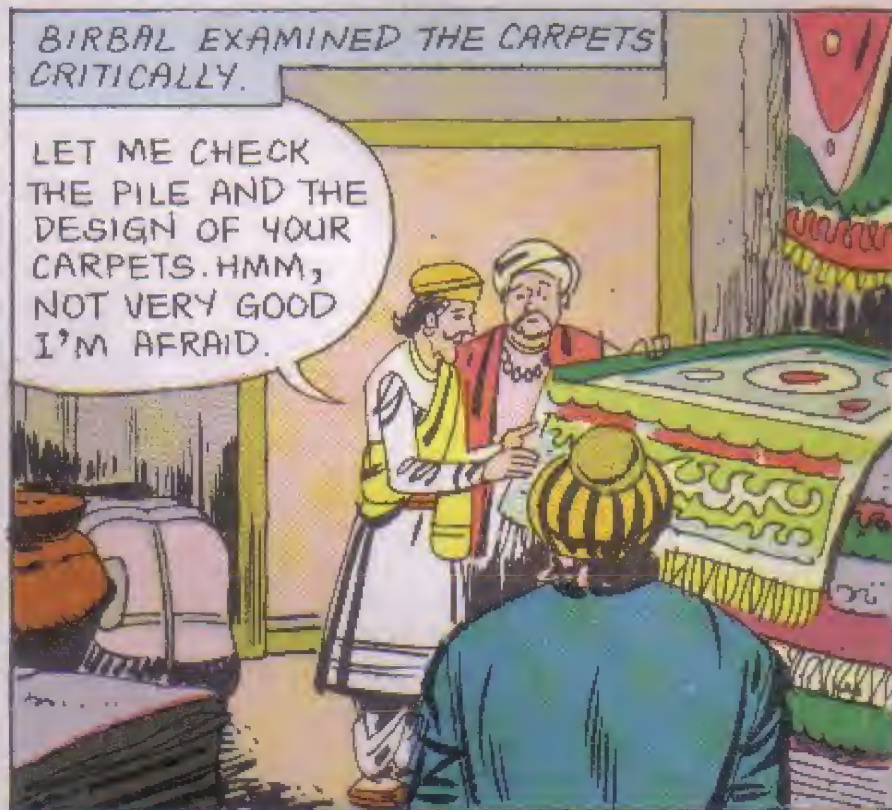
MUNIMJI, JUST CHECK THE GOODS FOR THEIR WORTH.

SHOW US SOME SAMPLES.



BIRBAL EXAMINED THE CARPETS CRITICALLY.

LET ME CHECK THE PILE AND THE DESIGN OF YOUR CARPETS. HMM, NOT VERY GOOD I'M AFRAID.



EVEN FIVE THOUSAND IS TOO MUCH FOR THESE INFERIOR QUALITY CARPETS.

YES, YOU ARE RIGHT. WE SHOULDN'T PAY MORE THAN THREE THOUSAND.



WELL, IF THAT'S THE MAXIMUM YOU ARE READY TO PAY, I'LL HAVE TO ACCEPT IT.

AGREED. WE'LL COME TOMORROW TO COLLECT THE GOODS AND PAY THE MONEY.



NOW THE TWO WENT TO THE INN WHERE THE TRADER WAS STAYING.

I HEARD YOU HAVE BROUGHT GOODS WORTH 10,000 FOR SALE.

THEY ARE THE FINEST OF CARPETS.



WELL, THE DEMAND FOR CARPETS IS RATHER LOW. WILL YOU SELL FOR FIVE THOUSAND?

WHAAAT?!





NEXT DAY, AT THE APPOINTED HOUR, THE BOATMAN AND THE TRADER CAME TO THE COURT

SO, WHO IS THE OWNER OF THESE CARPETS?



BIRBAL WAS ALMOST CERTAIN WHO WAS THE TRUE OWNER OF THE GOODS. HE SUMMONED THE OARSMEN TO THE COURT AND CALLED THEM ASIDE.



AS HE HAD EXPECTED, THE SCARED OARSMEN BLURTED OUT THE TRUTH.

YES SIR, THE GOODS BELONG TO THE TRADER. OUR MASTER GAVE US 25 RUPEES EACH TO SAY THEY WERE HIS. SPARE US!



NOW THAT HIS CRIME WAS OUT, THE BOATMAN QUICKLY CONFESSED —

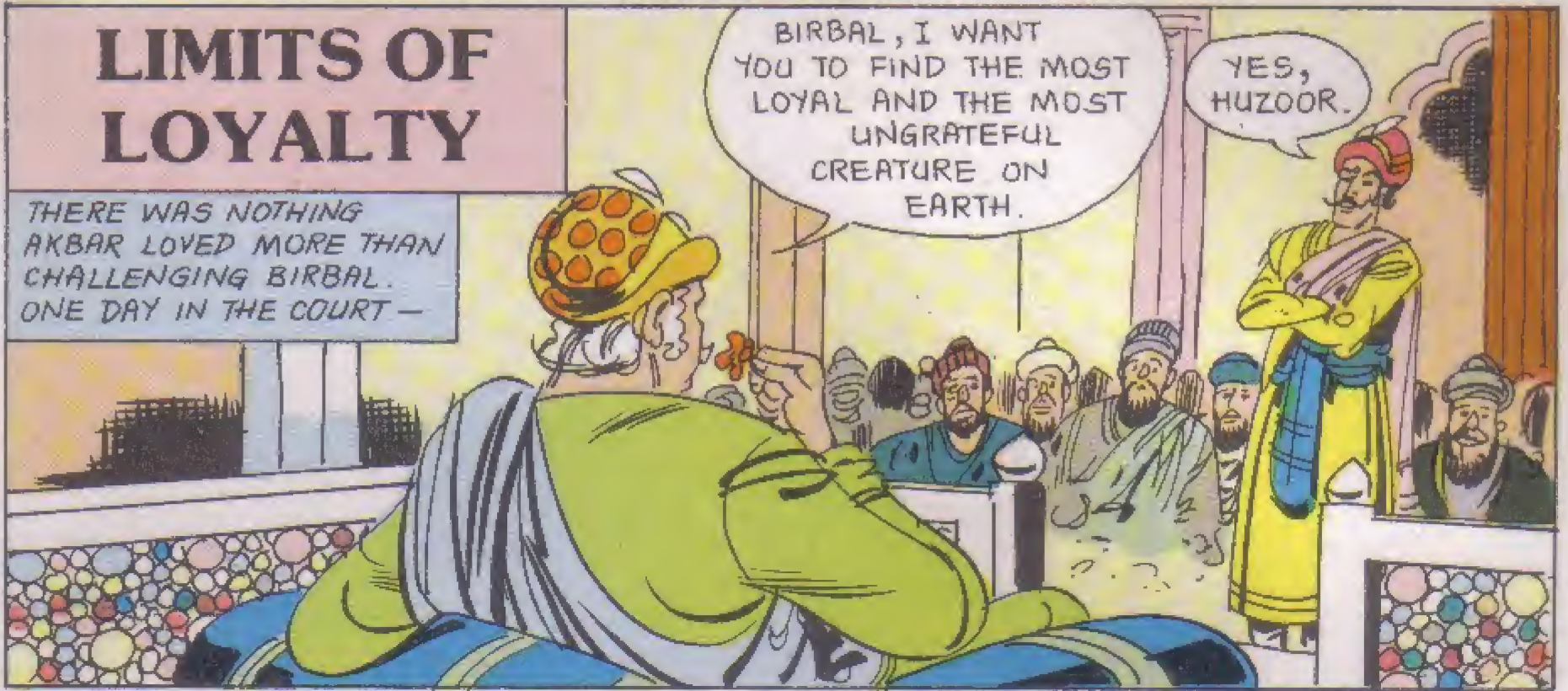
YES, THAT IS TRUE. I WAS TEMPTED BY THE CHANCE TO MAKE QUICK MONEY.



SINCE IT'S YOUR FIRST OFFENCE, I'LL LET YOU OFF LIGHTLY. YOU MUST RETURN THE GOODS TO THE OWNER AND ALSO PAY HIM RS. 500. TO THE STATE YOU MUST PAY RS. 500 AS FINE.

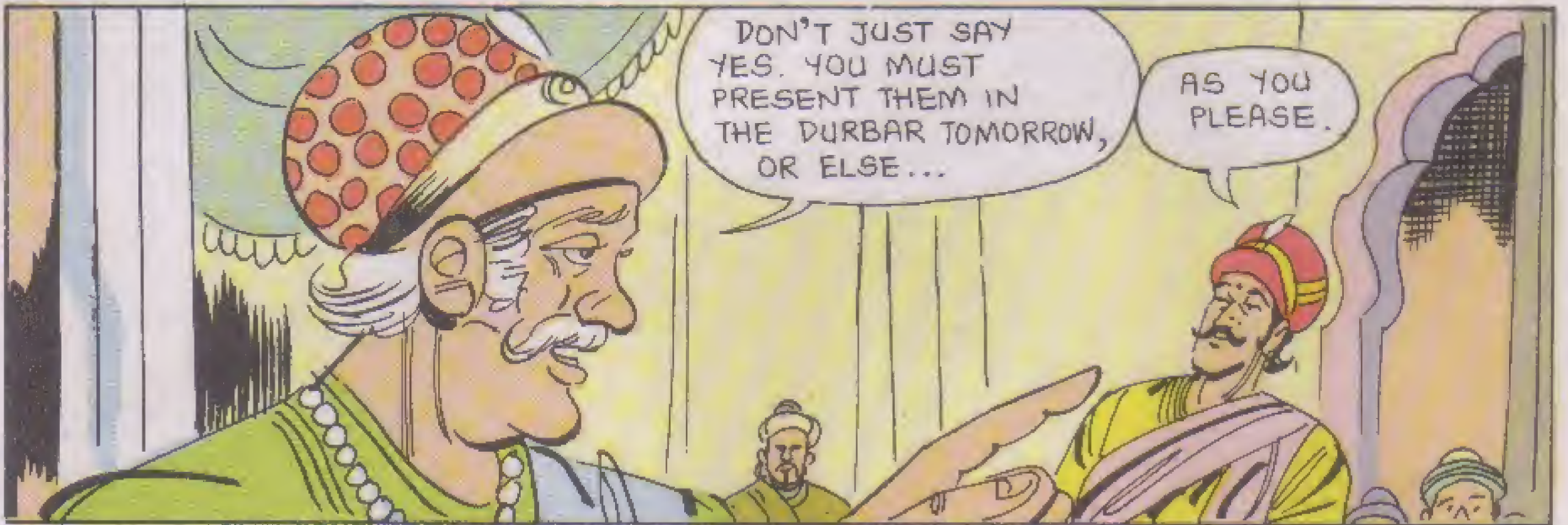
LIMITS OF LOYALTY

THERE WAS NOTHING AKBAR LOVED MORE THAN CHALLENGING BIRBAL. ONE DAY IN THE COURT —



BIRBAL, I WANT YOU TO FIND THE MOST LOYAL AND THE MOST UNGRATEFUL CREATURE ON EARTH.

YES, HUZOOR.



DON'T JUST SAY YES. YOU MUST PRESENT THEM IN THE DURBAR TOMORROW, OR ELSE...

AS YOU PLEASE.

BIRBAL AGREED TO DO AS ASKED. BUT ON GOING HOME, HIS DAUGHTER SAID —



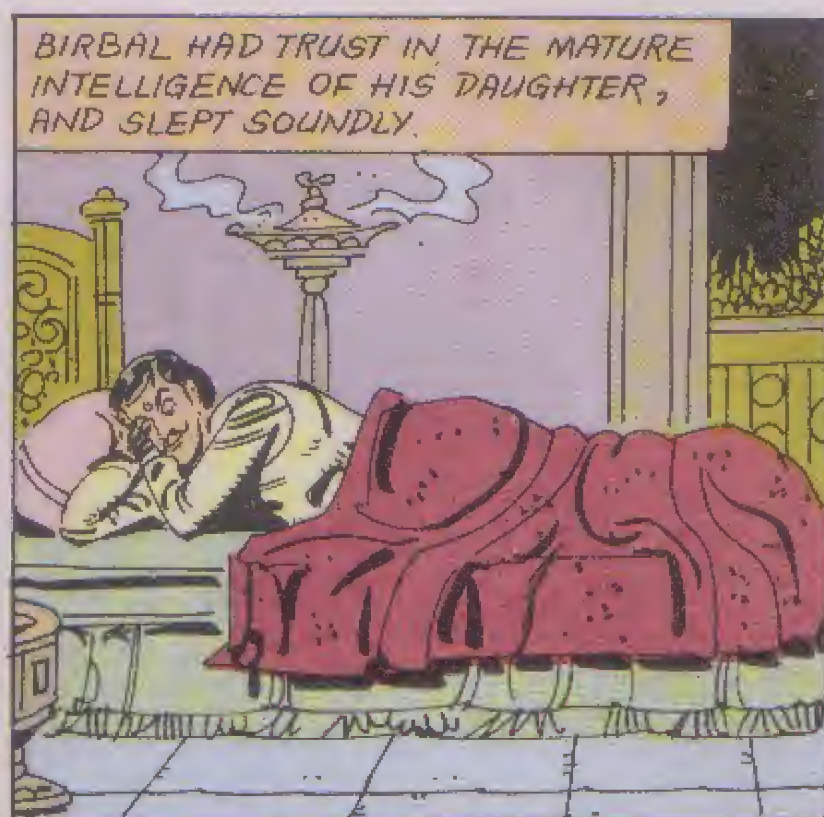
FATHER, YOU SEEM TO BE WORRIED. YOU'VE BEEN STARING AT THE CEILING FOR THE LAST HALF HOUR.

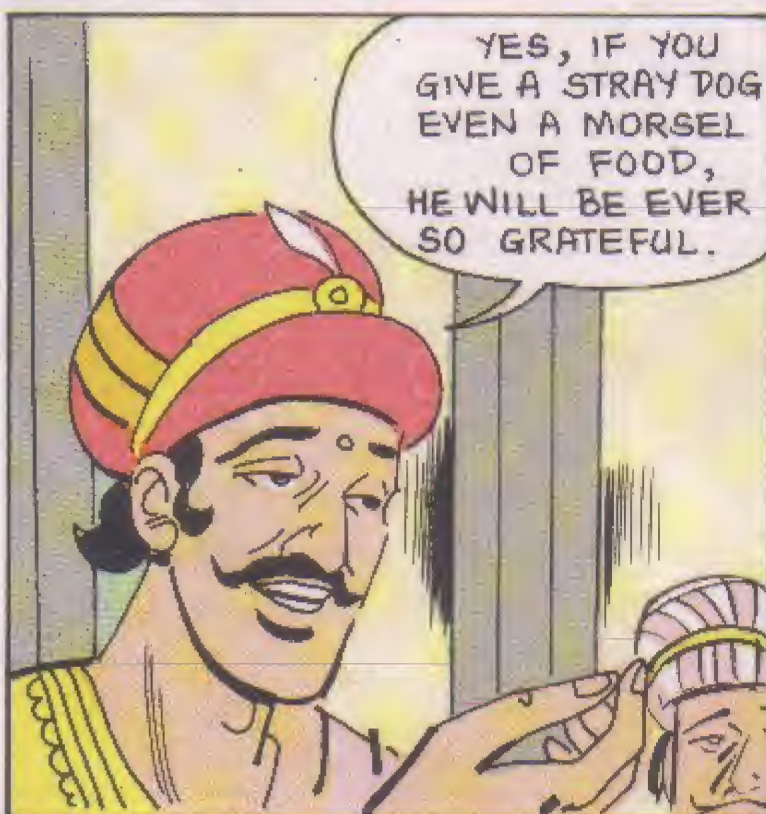
YES, I AM A LITTLE DISTURBED.

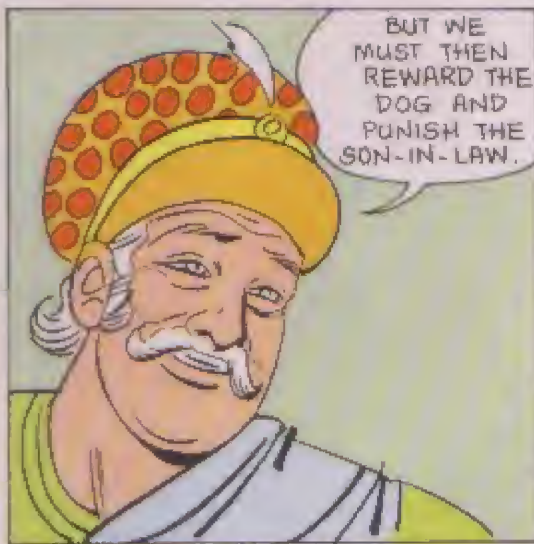


IS IT A PROBLEM POSED BY THE EMPEROR?

YES, HE WANTS ME TO BRING HIM THE MOST LOYAL AND THE MOST UNGRATEFUL CREATURE BY TOMORROW MORNING.







BUT WE
MUST THEN
REWARD THE
DOG AND
PUNISH THE
SON-IN-LAW.



LET THE DOG BE
FED SUMPTUOUSLY.
AS FOR THE SON-IN-
LAW, LET HIM BE
HANGED.

BUT...
BUT...
HUZOOR.



NO BUTS, BIRBAL, I
BELIEVE IN
JUSTICE.

BUT HE
IS ONLY A
SPECIMEN, ONLY
A REPRESENTATIVE
OF ALL
SONS-IN-LAW.



SO ?

IF YOU DECIDE
TO AWARD A
PUNISHMENT, ALL
OF THEM MUST
BE HANGED.



WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN?

I MEAN,
YOU WILL
HAVE TO HANG
ALL
SONS-IN-LAW...

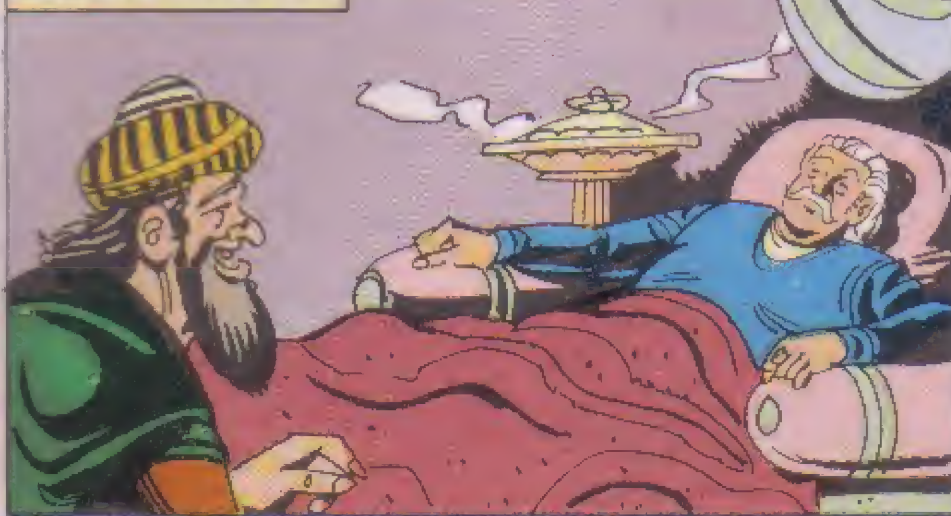


...INCLUDING ME AND
YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS.
EVERYONE OF US IS
SOMEBODY'S
SON-IN-LAW.

IN THAT
CASE, LET
HIM GO!

AND OFF IT FLEW

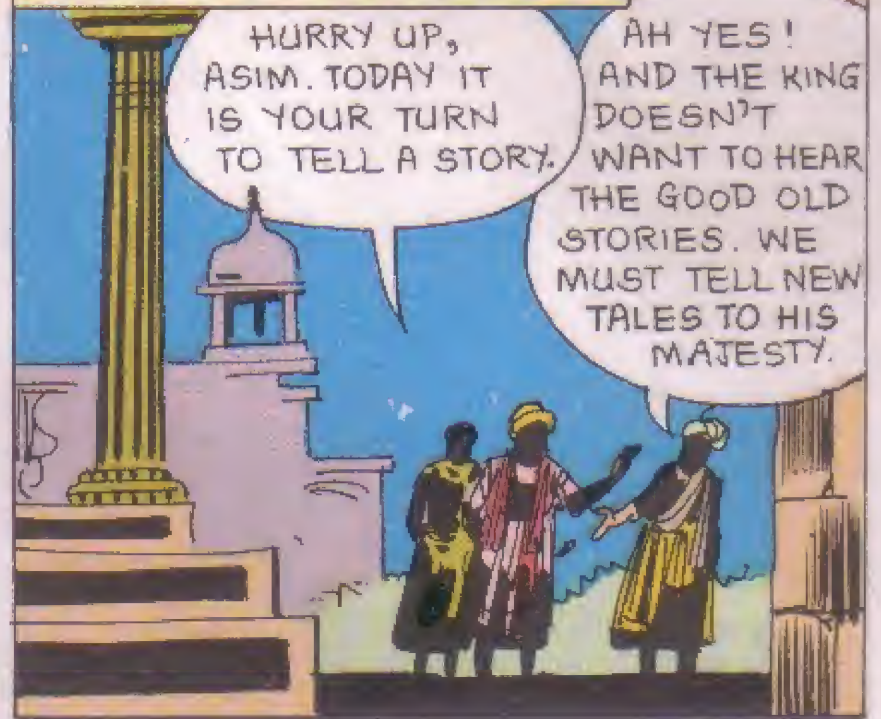
AKBAR WAS FOND OF STORIES. HE COULD NOT SLEEP UNLESS HE LISTENED TO A NEW TALE EVERY NIGHT.



ONE BY ONE, HIS COURTIERS WOULD BE SUMMONED.

HURRY UP, ASIM. TODAY IT IS YOUR TURN TO TELL A STORY.

AH YES! AND THE KING DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR THE GOOD OLD STORIES. WE MUST TELL NEW TALES TO HIS MAJESTY.



ONE EVENING, IT WAS BIRBAL'S TURN. BIRBAL WOULD SPIN A LONG YARN. EACH TIME HE PAUSED FOR BREATH —

AND THEN?

ALL HE HAS TO SAY IS 'AND THEN?' IT'S MY POOR JAW THAT GETS WEARY TALKING.

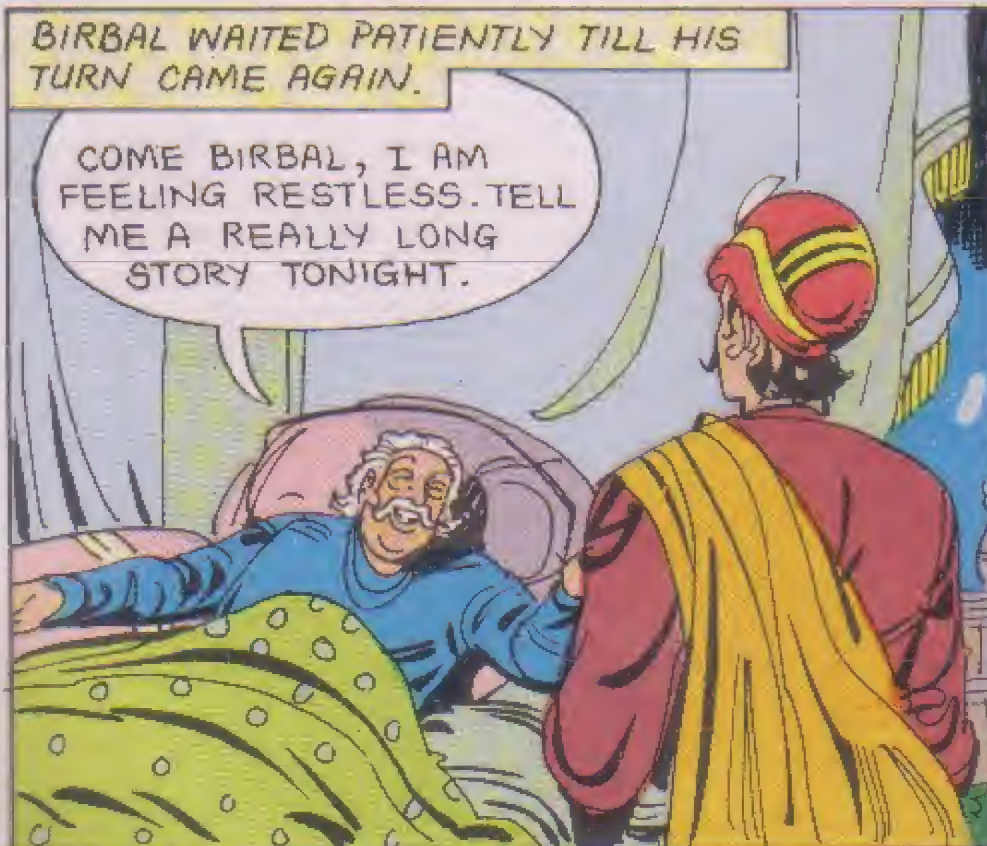


I MUST CURE HIM OF THIS HABIT OF HIS. HOW CAN WE FIND ENDLESS NEW STORIES EVERY DAY?



BIRBAL WAITED PATIENTLY TILL HIS TURN CAME AGAIN.

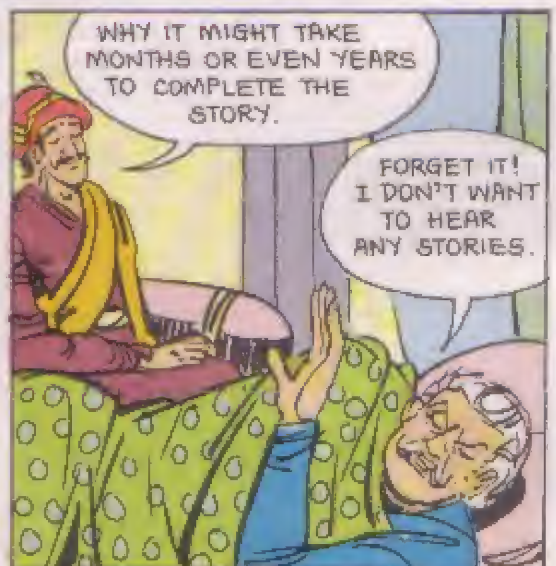
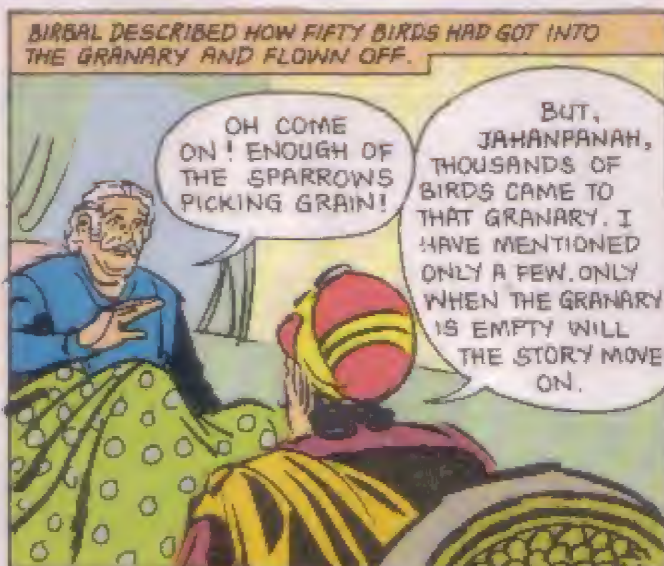
COME BIRBAL, I AM FEELING RESTLESS. TELL ME A REALLY LONG STORY TONIGHT.



BIRBAL SETTLED DOWN COMFORTABLY AND BEGAN.

ONE DAY, A RICH FARMER ORDERED A GRANARY TO BE MADE.



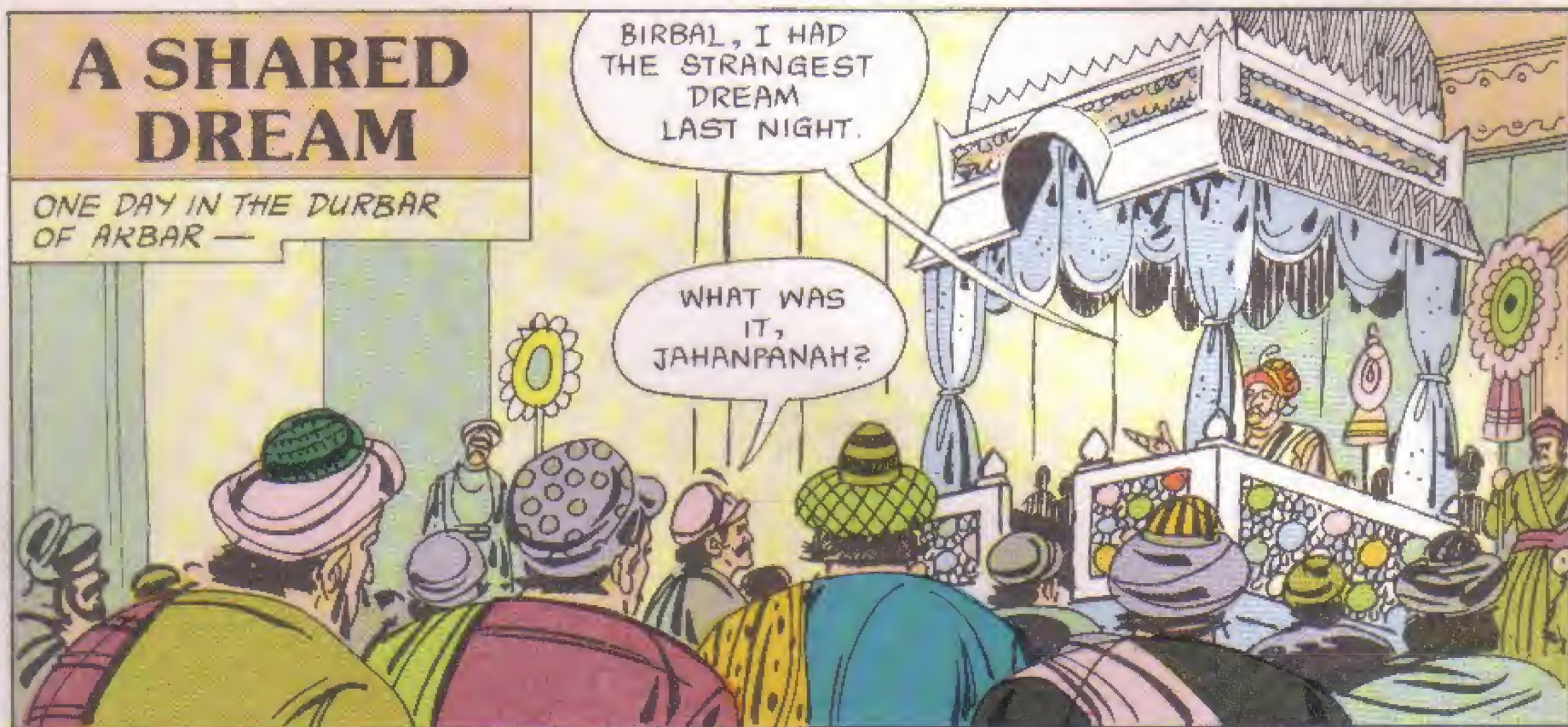


A SHARED DREAM

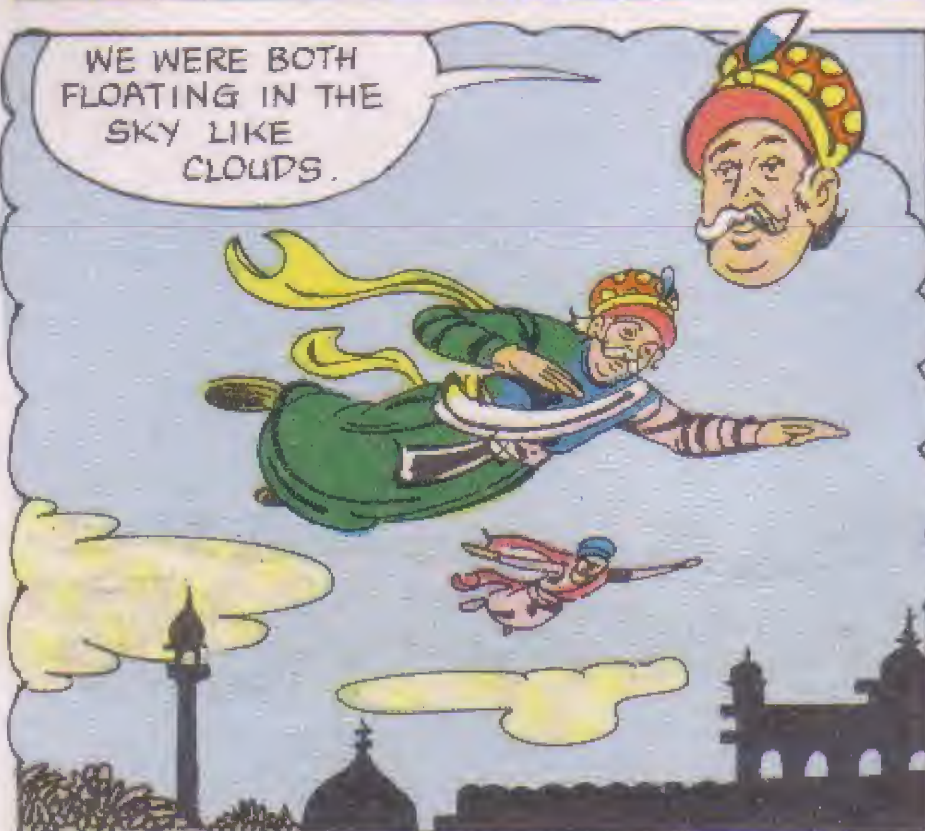
ONE DAY IN THE DURBAR OF ARBAR —

BIRBAL, I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM LAST NIGHT.

WHAT WAS IT, JAHANPANAHA?



WE WERE BOTH FLOATING IN THE SKY LIKE CLOUDS.



THEN SUDDENLY WE BOTH FELL DOWN WITH A BANG.



I FELL INTO A BIG PIT FILLED WITH HONEY.



BUT YOU, BIRBAL, FELL INTO A GUTTER.

HUH!



